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Book of the Native

Charles GD Roberts

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**THE GIFT OF
MRS. THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON
AND
MARGARET HIGGINSON BARNEY**

Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson,
from
Charles G. D. Roberts
with the deepest admiration & regard

Feb 4th 1897

The Book of the Native

By

Charles G. D. Roberts



Boston — New York — London
Lamson, Wolfe and Company

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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C. G. D. R.

FREDERICTON, N.B., August, 1896.

To
Goodridge Bliss Roberts

The kindly strength of open fields,
The faith of eve, the calm of air,
They lift my spirit close to thee
In memory and prayer.

CONTENTS

I. THE BOOK OF THE NATIVE

	Page
Kinship	11
Origins	16
An April Adoration	19
An Oblation	21
Resurrection	25
Afoot	27
Where the Cattle come to Drink	31
The Heal-All	32
Recompense	35
An Epitaph for a Husbandman	37
The Little Field of Peace	40
Renewal	43
The Unsleeping	45
Recessional	48
Earth's Complines	52
Two Spheres	55
The Stillness of the Frost	58
A Child's Prayer at Evening	59

II. LYRICS

The Frosted Pane	63
The Brook in February	64
Beside the Winter Sea	65
The Quest of the Arbutus	67
The Jonquil	70

	Page
The Trout Brook	72
A Wake-up Song	75
Butterflies	77
July	78
An August Wood Road	81
Apple Song	84
The Cricket	87
The Train among the Hills	89
The Lone Wharf	90
The Witches' Flight	92
Three Good Things	95
Trysting Song	98
Love's Translator	100
Ebb	103
Twilight on Sixth Avenue	105
Mothers	107
Up and Away in the Morning	108
Home, Home in the Evening	110
Sleepy Man	112

III. BALLADS

The Wrestler	117
The Ballad of Crossing the Brook	120
Whitewaters	124
The Forest Fire	136
The Vengeance of Gluskâp	142
The Muse and the Wheel	145
The "Laughing Sally"	150

I

The Book of the Native

Kinship

Back to the bewildering vision
And the border-land of birth ;
Back into the looming wonder,
The companionship of earth ;

Back unto the simple kindred —
Childlike fingers, childlike eyes,
Working, waiting, comprehending,
Now in patience, now surprise ;

The Book of the Native

Back unto the faithful healing
And the candor of the sod —
Scent of mould and moisture stirring
At the secret touch of God ;

Back into the ancient stillness
Where the wise enchanter weaves,
To the twine of questing tree-root,
The expectancy of leaves ;

Back to hear the hushed consulting
Over bud and blade and germ,
As the Mother's mood apportions
Each its pattern, each its term ;

Kinship

Back into the grave beginnings
Where all wonder-tales are true,
Strong enchantments, strange successions,
Mysteries of old and new ;

Back to knowledge and renewal,
Faith to fashion and reveal,
Take me, Mother, — in compassion
All thy hurt ones fain to heal.

Back to wisdom take me, Mother ;
Comfort me with kindred hands ;
Tell me tales the world's forgetting,
Till my spirit understands.

The Book of the Native

Tell me how some sightless impulse,
Working out a hidden plan,
God for kin and clay for fellow,
Wakes to find itself a man.

Tell me how the life of mortal,
Wavering from breath to breath,
Like a web of scarlet pattern
Hurtles from the loom of death.

How the caged bright bird, desire,
Which the hands of God deliver,
Beats aloft to drop unheeded
At the confines of forever :

Kinship

Faints unheeded for a season,
Then outwings the furthest star,
To the wisdom and the stillness
Where thy consummations are.

Origins

Out of the dreams that heap
The hollow hand of sleep, —
Out of the dark sublime,
The echoing deeps of time, —
From the averted Face
Beyond the bournes of space,
Into the sudden sun
We journey, one by one.
Out of the hidden shade
Wherein desire is made, —
Out of the pregnant stir
Where death and life confer, —

Origins

The dark and mystic heat
Where soul and matter meet, —
The enigmatic Will, —
We start, and then are still.

Inexorably decreed
By the ancestral deed,
The puppets of our sires,
We work out blind desires,
And for our sons ordain,
The blessing or the bane.
In ignorance we stand
With fate on either hand,
And question stars and earth
Of life, and death, and birth.
With wonder in our eyes
We scan the kindred skies,
While through the common grass

The Book of the Native

Our atoms mix and pass.
We feel the sap go free
When spring comes to the tree ;
And in our blood is stirred
What warms the brooding bird.
The vital fire we breathe
That bud and blade bequeathe,
And strength of native clay
In our full veins hath sway.

But in the urge intense
And fellowship of sense,
Suddenly comes a word
In other ages heard.
On a great wind our souls
Are borne to unknown goals,
And past the bournes of space
To the unaverted Face.

An April Adoration

Sang the sunrise on an amber morn—

“Earth, be glad! An April day is born.

“Winter’s done, and April’s in the skies.

Earth, look up with laughter in your eyes!”

Putting off her dumb dismay of snow,

Earth bade all her unseen children grow.

Then the sound of growing in the air

Rose to God a liturgy of prayer ;

The Book of the Native

And the thronged succession of the days
Uttered up to God a psalm of praise.

Laughed the running sap in every vein,
Laughed the running flurries of warm rain,

Laughed the life in every wandering root,
Laughed the tingling cells of bud and shoot.

God in all the concord of their mirth
Heard the adoration-song of Earth.

An Oblation

Behind the fateful gleams
Of Life's foretelling streams
 Sat the Artificer
Of souls and deeds and dreams.

Before him April came ;
And on her mouth his name
 Breathed like a flower
And lightened like a flame.

The Book of the Native

She offered him a world
With showers of joy empearled ;
 And a Spring wind
With iris wings unfurled.

She offered him a flight
Of birds that fare by night,
 Voyaging northward
By the ancestral sight.

She offered him a star
From the blue fields afar,
 Where unforgotten
The ghosts of gladness are.

An Oblation

And every root and seed
Blind stirring in the mead
 Her hands held up,—
And still he gave no heed.

Then from a secret nook
Beside a pasture brook,—
 A place of leaves,—
A pink-lipped bloom she took.

Softly before his feet,
Oblation small and sweet,
 She laid the arbutus,
And found the offering meet.

The Book of the Native

Over the speaking tide,
Where Death and Birth abide,
 He stretched his palm,
And strewed the petals wide;—

And o'er the ebbing years,
Dark with the drift of tears,
 A sunbeam broke,
And summer filled the spheres,

Resurrection

Daffodil, lily, and crocus,
They stir, they break from the sod,
They are glad of the sun, and they open
Their golden hearts to God.

They, and the wilding families,—
Windflower, violet, may,—
They rise from the long, long dark
To the ecstasy of day.

The Book of the Native

We, scattering troops and kindreds,
From out of the stars wind-blown
To this wayside corner of space,
This world that we call our own,—

We, of the hedge-rows of Time,
We, too, shall divide the sod,
Emerge to the light, and blossom,
With our hearts held up to God.

Afoot

Comes the lure of green things growing,
Comes the call of waters flowing, —
And the wayfarer desire
Moves and wakes and would be going.

Hark the migrant hosts of June
Marching nearer noon by noon !
Hark the gossip of the grasses
Bivouacked beneath the moon !

The Book of the Native

Hark the leaves their mirth averring ;
Hark the buds to blossom stirring ;
 Hark the hushed, exultant haste
Of the wind and world conferring !

Hark the sharp, insistent cry
Where the hawk patrols the sky !
 Hark the flapping, as of banners,
Where the heron triumphs by !

Empire in the coasts of bloom
Humming cohorts now resume,—
 And desire is forth to follow
Many a vagabond perfume.

Afoot

Long the quest and far the ending
Where my wayfarer is wending, —
 When desire is once afoot,
Doom behind and dream attending !

Shuttle-cock of indecision,
Sport of chance's blind derision,
 Yet he may not fail nor tire
Till his eyes shall win the Vision.

In his ears the phantom chime
Of incommunicable rhyme,
 He shall chase the fleeting camp-fires
Of the Bedouins of Time.

The Book of the Native

Farer by uncharted ways,
Dumb as Death to plaint or praise,
Unreturning he shall journey,
Fellow to the nights and days :—

Till upon the outer bar
Stilled the moaning currents are,—
Till the flame achieves the zenith,—
Till the moth attains the star,—

Till, through laughter and through tears,
Fair the final peace appears,
And about the watered pastures
Sink to sleep the nomad years !

Where the Cattle come to Drink

At evening, where the cattle come to drink,
Cool are the long marsh-grasses, dewy cool
The alder thickets, and the shallow pool,
And the brown clay about the trodden brink.
The pensive afterthoughts of sundown sink
Over the patient acres given to peace ;
The homely cries and farmstead noises cease,
And the worn day relaxes, link by link.

A lesson that the open heart may read
Breathes in this mild benignity of air,
These dear, familiar savours of the soil,—
A lesson of the calm of humble creed,
The simple dignity of common toil,
And the plain wisdom of unspoken prayer.

The Heal-All

Dear blossom of the wayside kin,
Whose homely, wholesome name
Tells of a potency within
To win thee country fame !

The sterile hillocks are thy home,
Beside the windy path ;
The sky, a pale and lonely dome,
Is all thy vision hath.

The Heal-All

Thy unobtrusive purple face
Amid the meagre grass
Greets me with long-remembered grace,
And cheers me as I pass.

And I, outworn by petty care,
And vexed with trivial wrong,
I heed thy brave and joyous air
Until my heart grows strong.

A lesson from the Power I crave
That moves in me and thee,
That makes thee modest, calm, and brave, —
Me restless as the sea.

The Book of the Native

Thy simple wisdom I would gain, —
To heal the hurt Life brings,
With kindly cheer, and faith in pain,
And joy of common things.

Recompense

To Beauty and to Truth I heaped
My sacrificial fires.
I fed them hot with selfish thoughts
And many proud desires.

I stripped my days of dear delights
To cast them in the flame,
Till life seemed naked as a rock,
And pleasure but a name.

The Book of the Native

And still I sorrowed patiently,
And waited day and night,
Expecting Truth from very far
And Beauty from her height.

Then laughter ran among the stars ;
And this I heard them tell :
“ Beside his threshold is the shrine
Where Truth and Beauty dwell ! ”

An Epitaph for a Husbandman

He who would start and rise
Before the crowing cocks—
No more he lifts his eyes,
Whoever knocks.

He who before the stars
Would call the cattle home,—
They wait about the bars
For him to come.

The Book of the Native

Him at whose hearty calls
The farmstead woke again
The horses in their stalls
Expect in vain.

Busy, and blithe, and bold,
He laboured for the morrow,—
The plough his hands would hold
Rusts in the furrow.

His fields he had to leave,
His orchards cool and dim;
The clods he used to cleave
Now cover him.

An Epitaph for a Husbandman

But the green, growing things
 Lean kindly to his sleep,—
White roots and wandering strings,
 Closer they creep.

Because he loved them long
 And with them bore his part,
Tenderly now they throng
 About his heart.

The Little Field of Peace

By the long wash of his ancestral sea
He sleeps how quietly !
How quiet the unlifting eyelids lie
Under this tranquil sky !
The little busy hands and restless feet
Here find that rest is sweet ;
For sweetly, from the hands grown tired of play,
The child-world slips away,
With its confusion of forgotten toys
And kind, familiar noise.

Not lonely does he lie in his last bed,
For love o'erbroods his head.

The Little Field of Peace

Kindly to him the comrade grasses lean
 Their fellowship of green.
The wilding meadow companies give heed,—
 Brave tansy, and the weed
That on the dyke-top lifts its dauntless stalk,—
 Around his couch they talk.
The shadows of his oak-tree flit and play
 Above his dreams all day.
The wind, that was his playmate on the hills,
 His sleep with music fills.

Here in this tender acre by the tide
 His vanished kin abide.
Ah! what compassionate care for him they keep,
 Too soon returned to sleep!
They watch him in this little field of peace
 Where they have found release.

The Book of the Native

Not as a stranger or alone he went .
Unto his long content ;
But kissed to sleep and comforted lies he
By his ancestral sea.

Renewal

Comrade of the whirling planets,
Mother of the leaves and rain,
Make me joyous as thy birds are,
Let me be thy child again.

Show me all the troops of heaven
Tethered in a sphere of dew,—
All the dear familiar marvels
Old, child-hearted singers knew.

Renewal

Let me laugh with children's laughter,
Breathe with herb and blade and tree,
Learn again forgotten lessons
Of thy grave simplicity.

Take me back to dream and vision
From the prison-house of pain,
Back to fellowship with wonder —
Mother, take me home again !

The Unsleeping

I soothe to unimagined sleep
The sunless bases of the deep.
And then I stir the aching tide
That gropes in its reluctant side.

I heave aloft the smoking hill ;
To silent peace its throes I still.
But ever at its heart of fire
I lurk, an unassuaged desire.

The Book of the Native

I wrap me in the sightless germ
An instant or an endless term ;
And still its atoms are my care,
Dispersed in ashes or in air.

I hush the comets one by one
To sleep for ages in the sun ;
The sun resumes before my face
His circuit of the shores of space.

The mount, the star, the germ, the deep,
They all shall wake, they all shall sleep.
Time, like a flurry of wild rain,
Shall drift across the darkened pane.

The Unsleeping

Space, in the dim predestined hour,
Shall crumble like a ruined tower.
I only, with unfaltering eye,
Shall watch the dreams of God go by.

Recessional

Now along the solemn heights
Fade the Autumn's altar-lights ;
 Down the great earth's glimmering chancel
Glide the days and nights.

Little kindred of the grass,
Like a shadow in a glass
 Falls the dark and falls the stillness ;
We must rise and pass.

Recessional

We must rise and follow, wending
Where the nights and days have ending,—
 Pass in order pale and slow
Unto sleep extending.

Little brothers of the clod,
Soul of fire and seed of sod,
 We must fare into the silence
At the knees of God.

Little comrades of the sky
Wing to wing we wander by,
 Going, going, going, going,
Softly as a sigh.

The Book of the Native

Hark, the moving shapes confer,
Globe of dew and gossamer,
 Fading and ephemeral spirits
In the dusk astir.

Moth and blossom, blade and bee,
Worlds must go as well as we,
 In the long procession joining
Mount, and star, and sea.

Toward the shadowy brink we climb
Where the round year rolls sublime,
 Rolls, and drops, and falls forever
In the vast of time ;

Recessional

Like a plummet plunging deep
Past the utmost reach of sleep,
 Till remembrance has no longer
Care to laugh or weep.

Earth's Complines

Before the feet of the dew
There came a call I knew,
 Luring me into the garden
Where the tall white lilies grew.

I stood in the dusk between
The companies of green,
 O'er whose aerial ranks
The lilies rose serene.

Earth's Complines

And the breathing air was stirred
By an unremembered word,
 Soft, incommunicable —
And wings not of a bird.

I heard the spent blooms sighing,
The expectant buds replying ;
 I felt the life of the leaves,
Ephemeral, yet undying.

The spirits of earth were there,
Thronging the shadowed air,
 Serving among the lilies,
In an ecstasy of prayer.

The Book of the Native

Their speech I could not tell ;
But the sap in each green cell,
 And the pure initiate petals,
They knew that language well.

I felt the soul of the trees—
Of the white, eternal seas—
 Of the flickering bats and night-moths
And my own soul kin to these.

And a spell came out of space
From the light of its starry place,
 And I saw in the deep of my heart
The image of God's face.

Two Spheres

While eager angels watched in awe,
God fashioned with his hands
Two shining spheres to work his law,
And carry his commands.

With patient art he shaped them true,
With calm, untiring care ;
And none of those bright watchers knew
Which one to call most fair.

The Book of the Native

He dropped one lightly down to earth
Amid the morning's blue —
And on a gossamer had birth
A bead of blinding dew.

It flamed across the hollow field,
On tiptoe to depart,
Outvied Arcturus, and revealed
All heaven in its heart.

He tossed the other into space
(As children toss a ball)
To swing forever in its place
With equal rise and fall ;

Two Spheres

To flame through the ethereal dark,
Among its brother spheres,
An orbit too immense to mark
The little tide of years.

The Stillness of the Frost

Out of the frost-white wood comes winnowing through
No wing ; no homely call or cry is heard.
Even the hope of life seems far deferred.
The hard hills ache beneath their spectral hue.
A dove-gray cloud, tender as tears or dew,
From one lone hearth exhaling, hangs unstirred,
Like the poised ghost of some unnamed great bird
In the ineffable pallor of the blue.
Such, I must think, even at the dawn of Time,
Was thy white hush, O world, when thou lay'st cold,
Unwaked to love, new from the Maker's word,
And the spheres, watching, stilled their high accord,
To marvel at perfection in thy mould,
The grace of thine austerity sublime !

A Child's Prayer at Evening

(Domine, cui sunt Pleiades curae)

Father, who keep'st
The stars in Thy care,
Me, too, Thy little one,
Childish in prayer,
Keep, as Thou keepest
The soft night through,
Thy long, white lilies
Asleep in Thy dew.

II

Lyrics

The Frosted Pane

One night came Winter noiselessly, and leaned
Against my window-pane.

In the deep stillness of his heart convened
The ghosts of all his slain.

Leaves, and ephemera, and stars of earth,
And fugitives of grass, —
White spirits loosed from bonds of mortal birth,
He drew them on the glass.

The Brook in February

A snowy path for squirrel and fox,
It winds between the wintry firs.
Snow-muffled are its iron rocks,
And o'er its stillness nothing stirs.

But low, bend low a listening ear!
Beneath the mask of moveless white
A babbling whisper you shall hear
Of birds and blossoms, leaves and light.



Beside the Winter Sea

As one who sleeps, and hears across his dream
The cry of battles ended long ago,
Inland I hear the calling of the sea.
I hear its hollow voices, though between
My wind-worn dwelling and thy wave-worn strand
How many miles, how many mountains are !
And thou beside the winter sea alone
Art walking, with thy cloak about thy face.
Bleak, bleak the tide, and evening coming on ;
And gray the pale, pale light that wans thy face.
Solemnly breaks the long wave at thy feet ;
And sullenly in patches clings the snow
Upon the low, red rocks worn round with years.

The Book of the Native

I see thine eyes, I see their grave desire,
Unsatisfied and lonely as the sea's;—
Yet how unlike the wintry sea's despair!
For could my feet but follow thine, my hands
But reach for thy warm hands beneath thy cloak,
What summer joy would lighten in thy face,
What sunshine warm thine eyes, and thy sad mouth
Break to a dewy rose, and laugh on mine!

The Quest of the Arbutus

For days the drench of noiseless rains,
Then sunshine on the vacant plains,
And April with her blind desire
A vagrant in my veins !

Because the tardy gods grew kind,
Unrest and care were cast behind ;
I took a day, and found the world
Was fashioned to my mind.

The Book of the Native

The swelling sap that thrilled the wood
Was cousin to my eager blood ;
I caught the stir of waking roots,
And knew that life was good.

But something in the odors fleet,
And in the sap's suggestion sweet,
Was lacking, — one thing everywhere
To make the spring complete.

At length within a leafy nest,
Where spring's persuasions pleaded best,
I found a pale, reluctant flower,
The purpose of my quest.

The Quest of the Arbutus

And then the world's expectancy
Grew clear: I knew its need to be
Not this dear flower, but one dear hand
To pluck the flower with me.

The Jonquil

Through its brown and withered bulb
How the white germ felt the sun
In the dark mould gently stirring
His Spring children one by one !

Thrilled with heat, it split the husk,
Shot a green blade up to light,
And unfurled its orange petals
In the old Enchanter's sight.

The Jonquil

One step more and it had floated
On the palpitating noon
Winged and free, a butterfly
Soaring from the rent cocoon.

But it could not leave its earth,
And the May-dew's tender tears, —
So it wavers there forever
'Twixt the green and azure spheres.

The Trout Brook

The airs that blew from the brink of day
Were fresh and wet with the breath of May.
I heard the babble of brown brooks falling,
And golden-wings in the woodside calling.

Big drops hung from the sparkling eaves ;
And through the screen of the thin young leaves
A glint of ripples, a whirl of foam,
Lured and beckoned me out from home.

The Trout Brook

My feet grew eager, my eyes grew wide,
And I was off by the brown brook's side.
Down in the swamp-bottom, cool and dim,
I cut me an alder sapling slim.

With nimble fingers I tied my line,
Clear as a sunbeam, strong and fine.
My fly was a tiny glittering thing,
With tinselled body and partridge wing.

With noiseless steps I threaded the wood,
Glad of the sun-pierced solitude.
Chattered the kingfisher, fierce and shy,
As like a shadow I drifted by.

The Book of the Native

Lurked in their watery lairs the trout,
But, silver and scarlet, I lured them out.
Wary were they, but warier still
My cunning wrist and my cast of skill.

I whipped the red pools under the beeches ;
I whipped the yellow and dancing reaches.
The purple eddy, smooth like oil,
And the tail of the rapid yielded spoil.

So all day long, till the day was done,
I followed the stream, I followed the sun.
Then homeward over the ridge I went,
The wandering heart of me well content.

A Wake-up Song

Sun's up ; wind's up ! Wake up, dearies !

Leave your coverlets white and downy.

June's come into the world this morning.

Wake up, Golden Head ! Wake up, Brownie !

Dew on the meadow-grass, waves on the water,

Robins in the rowan-tree wondering about you !

Don't keep the buttercups so long waiting.

Don't keep the bobolinks singing without you.

The Book of the Native

Wake up, Golden Head ! Wake up, Brownie !

Cat-bird wants you in the garden soon.

You and I, butterflies, bobolinks, and clover,

We've a lot to do on the first of June.

Butterflies

Once in a garden, when the thrush's song,
 Pealing at morn, made holy all the air,
Till earth was healed of many an ancient wrong,
 And life appeared another name for prayer,

Rose suddenly a swarm of butterflies,
 On wings of white and gold and azure fire ;
And one said, "These are flowers that seek the
 skies,
Loosed by the spell of their supreme desire."

July

I am for the open meadows,
Open meadows full of sun,
Where the hot bee hugs the clover,
The hot breezes drop and run.

I am for the uncut hayfields
Open to the cloudless blue, —
For the wide unshadowed acres
Where the summer's pomps renew ;

July

Where the grass-tops gather purple,
Where the ox-eye daisies thrive,
And the mendicants of summer
Laugh to feel themselves alive ;

Where the hot scent steams and quivers,
Where the hot saps thrill and stir,
Where in leaf-cells' green pavilions
Quaint artificers confer ;

Where the bobolinks are merry,
Where the beetles bask and gleam,
Where above the powdered blossoms
Powdered moth-wings poise and dream ;

The Book of the Native

Where the bead-eyed mice adventure
In the grass-roots green and dun.
Life is good and love is eager
In the playground of the sun !

An August Wood Road

When the partridge coveys fly
In the birch-tops cool and high ;

When the dry cicadas twang
Where the purpling fir-cones hang ;

When the bunch-berries emboss —
Scarlet beads — the roadside moss :

Brown with shadows, bright with sun,
All day long till day is done

The Book of the Native

Sleeps in murmuring solitude
The worn old road that threads the wood.

In its deep cup — grassy, cool —
Sleeps the little roadside pool ;

Sleeps the butterfly on the weed,
Sleeps the drifted thistle-seed.

Like a great and blazing gem,
Basks the beetle on the stem.

Up and down the shining rays
Dancing midges weave their maze.

High among the moveless boughs,
Drunk with day, the night-hawks drowse.

An August Wood Road

Far up, unfathomably blue,
August's heaven vibrates through.

The old road leads to all things good ;
The year's at full, and time's at flood.

Apple Song

O the sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
And the apples, hanging mellow,
 Red and yellow,
All down the orchard seen
Make a glory in the green.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
And the hollow barrels wait
 By the gate.
The cider-presses drip
With nectar for the lip.

Apple Song

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
And the yellow miles of grain
 Forget the rain.
The happy gardens yet
The winter's blight forget.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
O'er the marsh the cattle spread,
 White and red.
The sky is all as blue
As a gentian in the dew.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
And the maples are ablaze
 Through the haze.

The Book of the Native

The crickets in their mirth
Fife the fruiting song of earth.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
Now with flocking call and stir
 Birds confer,
As if their hearts were crost
By a fear of coming frost.

O the sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples ;
And the harvest air is sweet
 On the wheat.
Delight is not for long, —
Give us laughter, give us song !

The Cricket

- Oh, to be a cricket,
That's the thing !
To scurry in the grass
And to have one's fling !
And it's oh, to be a cricket
In the warm thistle-thicket,
Where the sun-winds pass,
Winds a-wing,
And the bumble-bees hang humming,
Hum and swing,
And the honey-drops are coming !

The Book of the Native

It's to be a summer rover,
That can see a sweet, and pick it
With the sting !
Never mind the sting !

And it's oh, to be a cricket
In the clover !
A gay summer rover
In the warm thistle-thicket,
Where the honey-drops are coming,
Where the bumble-bees hang humming—
That's the thing !

The Train among the Hills

Vast, unrevealed, in silence and the night
 Brooding, the ancient hills commune with sleep.
 Inviolate the solemn valleys keep
Their contemplation. Soon from height to height
Steals a red finger of mysterious light,
 And lion-footed through the forests creep
 Strange mutterings ; till suddenly, with sweep
And shattering thunder of resistless flight
And crash of routed echoes, roars to view,
 Down the long mountain gorge the Night Express
 Freighted with fears and tears and happiness. . . .
The dread form passes ; silence falls anew.
 And lo ! I have beheld the thronged, blind world
 To goals unseen from God's hand onward hurled.

The Lone Wharf

The long tides sweep
Around its sleep,
The long red tides of Tantramar.
Around its dream
They hiss and stream,
Sad for the ships that have sailed afar.

*How many lips
Have lost their bloom,
How many ships
Gone down to gloom,
Since keel and sail
Have fled out from me
Over the thunder and strain of the sea!*

The Lone Wharf

Its kale-dark sides
Throb in the tides;
The long winds over it spin and hum;
Its timbers ache
For memory's sake,
And the throngs that never again will come.

*How many lips
Have lost their bloom,
How many ships
Gone down to gloom,
Since keel and sail
Have fled out from me
Over the thunder and strain of the sea!*

The Witches' Flight

Come, Red Mouse,
And come, Black Cat !
Oh, see what the goat
And the toad are at !
Oh, see them where
They rise in the air,
And wheel and dance
With the whirling bat !

We rise, we rise
On the smoking air ;
And the withered breast
Grows young and fair ;

The Witches' Flight

And the eyes grow bright
With alluring light,
And the fierce mouth softens
With love's soft prayer.

Come, White Sisters,
Naked of limb !
The horned moon reddens ;
The stars grow dim ;
The crags in the gloom
Of our caldron's fume
Shudder and topple
And reel and swim.

We mount, we mount
Till the moon seems nigh.
Our rout possesses
The middle sky.

The Book of the Native

With strange embraces,
And maddened faces,
And streaming tresses,
We twist and fly.

Come, White Sisters,
And four-foot kin,
For the horned moon sinks
And the reek grows thin,
And brief is the night
Of our delight,
And brief the span
Of our secret sin.

Three Good Things

*Bona in terrâ tria inveni,
Ludum, venirem, vinum.*

*Three good things I've thanked the Gods for,—
Play, and love, and wine!*
So by Tiber sang my poet;—
Would the song were mine!

Yet methinks I would not turn it
Just the Roman way,
But for *ludum* say read *libros*,—
Books are more than play!

The Book of the Native

Through the togaed Latin trembles
 Laughter half divine ;
Flash the dice beside the column ;
 Rosy flagons shine.

I, for gleams of yellow Tiber,
 Down my garden way
See a water blue and beaming
 In the northern day.

Ovid, Meleager, Omar,
 In the orchard shade,
With a jug that gurgles gently,
 And a white-armed maid.

Three Good Things

Three good things I thank the Gods for, —
Books, and love, and wine :
So, my poet, singing later,
Would have run your line !

Trysting Song

Dear ! Dear !
As the night draws nigh draw near.
The world's forgotten ;
Work is done ;
The hour for loving
Is begun.

Sweet ! Sweet !
It is love-time when we meet.
The hush of desire
Falls with the dew,
And all the evening
Turns to you.

Trysting Song

Child ! Child !
With the warm heart wise and wild.
My spirit trembles
Under your hand ;
You look in my eyes
And understand.

Mine ! Mine !
Mistress of mood divine.
What lore of the ages
Bids you know
The heart of a man
Can love you so?

Love's Translator

When the white moon divides the mist,
My longing eyes believe
'Tis the white arm my lips have kissed
Flashing from thy sleeve.

And when the tall white lily sways
Upon her queenly stalk,
Thy white form fills my dreaming gaze
Down the garden walk.

Love's Translator

When, rich with rose, a wandering air
Breathes up the leafy place,
It seems to me thy perfumed hair
Blown across my face.

And when the thrush's golden note
Across the gloom is heard,
I think 'tis thy impassioned throat
Uttering one sweet word.

And when the scarlet poppy-bud
Breaks, breathing of the south,
A sudden warmth awakes my blood
Thinking of thy mouth.

The Book of the Native

And when that dove's wing dips in flight
Above the dreaming land,
I see some dear, remembered, white
Gesture of thy hand.

Wonder and love upon me wait
In service fair, when I
Into thy sweetness thus translate
Earth and air and sky.

Ebb

The tide goes out, the tide goes out ; once more
The empty day goes down the empty shore.

The tide goes out ; the wharves deserted lie
Under the empty solitude of sky.

The tide goes out ; the dwindling channels ache
With the old hunger, with the old heartbreak.

The tide goes out ; the lonely wastes of sand
Implore the benediction of thy hand.

The tide goes out, goes out ; the stranded ships
Desire the sea, — and I desire thy lips.

The Book of the Native

The tide goes out, the tide goes out ; the sun
Relumes the hills of longing one by one.

The tide goes out, goes out ; and goes my heart
On the long quest that ends but where thou art.

Twilight on Sixth Avenue

Over the tops of the houses

Twilight and sunset meet.

The green, diaphanous dusk

Sinks to the eager street.

Astray in the tangle of roofs

Wanders a wind of June.

The dial shines in the clock-tower

Like the face of a strange-scrawled moon.

The Book of the Native

The narrowing lines of the houses
Palely begin to gleam,
And the hurrying crowds fade softly
Like an army in a dream.

Above the vanishing faces
A phantom train flares on
With a voice that shakes the shadows,—
Diminishes, and is gone.

And I walk with the journeying throng
In such a solitude
As where a lonely ocean
Washes a lonely wood.

Mothers

Mary, when the childing pain
 Made thy patient eyes grow dim,
Of that anguish wert thou fain,
 Wert thou glad because of Him?
How thou smiledst in thy woe
Every mother's heart doth know.

Mary, when the helpless Child
 Nursed and slumbered at thy breast,
In the rosy form and mild
 Didst thou see the Heavenly Guest?
Such a guest from Paradise
Gladdens every mother's eyes.

Up and Away in the Morning

Tide's at full ; the wave breaks white
 (Oh, up and away in the morning) ;
Blue is the blown grass, red is the height ;
Washed with the sun the sail shines white
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).

Wide is the world in the laughing sun
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).
Work's to be done and wealth's to be won
Ere a man turns home with the homing sun
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).

Up and Away in the Morning .

Long is the heart's hope, long as the day
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).
Heart has its will and hand has its way
Till the world rolls over and ends the day
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).

It's home that we toil for all day long
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).
Hand on the line and heart in the song,
The labor of love will not seem long
 (Oh, up and away in the morning).

Home, Home in the Evening

When the crows fly in from sea

(Oh, home, home in the evening),

My love in his boat comes back to me,

Over the tumbling leagues of sea

(Oh, home, home in the evening).

And when the sun drops over the hill

(Oh, home, home in the evening),

My happy eyes they take their fill

Of watching my love as he climbs the hill

(Oh, home, home in the evening).

Home, Home in the Evening

And when the dew falls over the land
 (Oh, home, home in the evening).
I hold in my hand his dearest hand,
The happiest woman in all the land
 (Oh, home, home in the evening).

* * * * * *

All day she sang by the cottage door
 (Oh, home, home in the evening).
At sundown came his boat to the shore—
But he to the hearthside comes no more,
 Home, home in the evening.

Sleepy Man

When the Sleepy Man comes with the dust on his
eyes

(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)

He shuts up the earth, and he opens the skies.

(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

He smiles through his fingers, and shuts up the sun ;

(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)

The stars that he loves he lets out one by one.

(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

Sleepy Man

He comes from the castles of Drowsy-boy Town ;
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)
At the touch of his hand the tired eyelids fall down.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

He comes with a murmur of dream in his wings
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)
And whispers of mermaids and wonderful things.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

Then the top is a burden, the bugle a bane
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)
When one would be faring down Dream-a-way Lane,
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

The Book of the Native

When one would be wending in Lullaby Wherry
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary !)
To Sleepy Man's Castle by Comforting Ferry.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie !)

III

Ballads

The Wrestler

When God sends out His company to travel through
the stars,

There is every kind of wonder in the show ;

There is every kind of animal behind its prison bars ;

With riders in a many-colored row.

The master showman, Time, has a strange trick of
rhyme,

And the clown's most ribald jest is a tear ;

But the best drawing card is the Wrestler huge and
hard,

Who can fill the tent at any time of year.

The Book of the Native

His eye is on the crowd, and he beckons with his
hand,

With authoritative finger, and they come.

The rules of the game they do not understand,

But they go as in a dream, and are dumb.

They would fain say him nay, and they look the other
way,

Till at last to the ropes they cling.

But he throws them one by one till the show for them
is done,

In the blood-red dust of the ring.

There's none to shun his challenge — they must meet
him soon or late,

And he knows a cunning trick for all heels.

The king's haughty crown drops in jeers from his
pate

As the hold closes on him, and he reels.

The Wrestler

The burly and the proud, the braggarts of the crowd,
Every one of them he topples down in thunder.
His grip grows mild for the dotard and the child,
But alike they must all go under.

Oh, many a mighty foeman would try a fall with
him—

Persepolis and Babylon and Rome,
Assyria and Sardis, they see their fame grow dim,
As he tumbles in the dust every dome.

At length will come an hour when the stars shall feel
his power,

And he shall have his will upon the sun.

Ere we know what he's about, the stars will be put
out,

And the wonder of the show will be undone.

The Ballad of Crossing the Brook

Oh, it was a dainty maid that went a-Maying in
the morn,

A dainty, dainty maiden of degree.

The ways she took were merry and the ways she
missed forlorn,

And the laughing water tinkled to the sea.

The little leaves above her loved the dainty, dainty
maid ;

The little winds they kissed her, every one ;

At the nearing of her little feet the flowers were not
afraid ;

And the water lay a-whimpling in the sun.

The Ballad of Crossing the Brook

Oh, the dainty, dainty maid to the borders of the brook
Lingered down as lightly as the breeze ;
And the shy water-spiders quit their scurrying to look ;
And the happy water whispered to the trees.

She was fain to cross the brook, was the dainty,
dainty maid ;
But first she lifted up her elfin eyes
To see if there were cavalier or clown a-near to
aid,—
And the water-bubbles blinked in surprise.

The brook bared its pebbles to persuade her dainty
feet,
But the dainty, dainty maid was not content.
She had spied a simple country lad (for dainty maid
unmeet),
And the shy water twinkled as it went.

The Book of the Native

As the simple lad drew nigh, then this dainty, dainty
maid,

(O maidens, well you know how it was done !)
Stood a-gazing at her feet until he saw she was afraid
Of the water there a-whimpling in the sun.

Now that simple lad had in him all the makings of
a man ;

And he stammered, "I had better lift you over !"
Said the dainty, dainty maid — "Do you really think
you can?"

And the water hid its laughter in the clover.

So he carried her across, with his eyes cast down,
And his foolish heart a-quaking with delight.
And the maid she looked him over with her elfin
eyes of brown ;

And the impish water giggled at his plight.

The Ballad of Crossing the Brook

He reached the other side, he set down the dainty
maid ;

But he trembled so he couldn't speak a word.

Then the dainty, dainty maid — "Thank you, Sir !

Good-day !" she said.

And the water-bubbles chuckled as they heard.

Oh, she tripped away so lightly, a-Maying in the
morn,

That dainty, dainty maiden of degree ;

She left the simple country lad a-sighing and forlorn

Where the mocking water twinkled to the sea.

Whitewaters

Beside the wharf at Whitewaters
The loitering ebb with noon confers;
And o'er the amber flats there seems
A sleep to brood of sun and dreams.

The white and clustering cottages,
Thick shadowed by their windless trees,
Inhabit such a calm, that change
Goes by and lets her face grow strange.

Whitewaters

And not far off, on tiptoe seen,
The brown dike and the sky between,
A shifting field that heaves and slides, —
The blue breast of the Minas tides.

A-through the little harbor go
The currents of the scant Pereau,
Drawn slowly, drawn from springs unseen
Amid the marsh's vasts of green.

Up from the wharf at Whitewaters,
Where scarce a slim sandpiper stirs,
A yellow roadway climbs, that feels
Few footsteps and infrequent wheels.

The Book of the Native

It climbs to meet the westering sun
Upon the heights of Blomidon, —
Bulwark of peace, whose bastioned form
Out-bars the serried hosts of storm.

* * * * *

Down to the wharf at Whitewaters,
The children of the villagers
One drowsy, windless hour of noon
Deep in the green mid-heart of June,

Like swallows to a sunset pool
Came chattering, just let loose from school ;
And with them one small lad of four,
Picked up as they flocked past his door.

Whitewaters

His sea-blue, merry eyes, his hair
Curling and like the corn-silk fair,
His red, sweet mouth, made Hally Clive
Comely as any lad alive.

His father, master of "The Foam,"
Drave his tight craft afar from home ;
His mother—peaceful life was hers
With Hally, safe in Whitewaters.

And in his sun-brown arms the boy
Carried his last, most cherished toy ;
A small white kitten, free from fleck,
With a blue ribbon round its neck.

The Book of the Native

In the old timbers lapping cool,
About the wharf the tide hung full;
And at the wharf-side, just afloat,
Swung lazily an old gray boat.

About the froth-white water's edge,
The weedy planks, the washing sedge,
And in and out the rocking craft,
The children clambered, splashed, and laughed,

Till presently, grown tired of play,
Up the bright road they raced away;
But in the boat, a drowsy heap,
Curled boy and kitten, sound asleep.

Whitewaters

Warm in the sunny boat they slept.
Soon to its ebb the slow tide crept.
By stealthy fingers, soft as dream,
The boat was lured into the stream.

Out from the wharf it slipped and swung —
On the old rope one moment hung —
Then snapped its tether and away
For the storm-beaten outer bay.

In Whitewaters, in Whitewaters,
No watcher heeds, no rescuer stirs.
Out from the port the currents sweep
With Hally, smiling in his sleep.

The Book of the Native

An hour they drifted, till the boat
From the low shore one scarce might note.
The kitten climbed the prow, and mewed
Against the watery solitude.

Then Hally woke, and stared with eyes
Grown round and dark with grieved surprise.
Where were the children gone? And where
The gray old wharf, the weedy stair?

Bewildered, and but half awake,
He sobbed as if his heart would break;
Then, as his lonely terror grew,
Down in the boat himself he threw,

Whitewaters

And passionately for comfort pressed
The kind white kitten to his breast.
Through the thin plank his hand could feel
The little eddies clutch the keel ;

Lost and alone, lost and alone,
He heard the long wave hiss and moan,
He heard the wild ebb seethe and mourn
Along the outer shoals forlorn.

And now a wind that chafed the flood
Blew down from Noel's haunted wood ;
And now in the dread tides that run
Past the grim front of Blomidon,

The Book of the Native

Over the rolling troughs, between
The purple gulfs, the slopes of green,
With sickening glide and sullen rest
The old boat climbed from crest to crest.

* * * * *

That day in his good ship, "The Foam,"
Shipmaster Clive was speeding home ;
His heart was light, his eyes elate ;
His voyage had been fortunate.

"If the wind holds," said he, "to-night
We'll anchor under Kingsport Light ;—
I'll change the fogs of Fundy wild
For Whitewaters and wife and child."

Whitewaters

He marked the drifting boat, and laughed,
"What clumsy lubber's lost his craft?"
"What's that that walks the gunwale?" cried
A sailor leaning o'er the side.

The Captain raised his glass. Said he —
"A kitten! Some one's pet, maybe!
We'll give it passage in 'The Foam'!" —
Soft is the heart that's bound for home!

"Stop for a kitten?" growled the mate:—
"Look to the sun; we're getting late!
If we lose this tack we'll lie to-night
A long ways off o' Kingsport Light."

The Book of the Native

The Captain paused irresolute ; —
“To leave the helpless little brute
To the wrecked seaman's death accurst,
The slow fierce hunger, the mad thirst, —

“I wish not my worst enemy
Such death as that ! Lay to !” said he.
The ship came up into the wind ;
The slackening canvas flapped and dinned ;

And the ship's boat with scant delay
Was swung and lowered and away, —
The Captain at the helm, and four
Stout men of Avon at the oar.

Whitewaters

They neared the drifting craft ; and when
They bumped against her gunwale, then
Hally upraised his tumbled head !
“ My God ! My boy ! ” the Captain said.

* * * * *

And now with bellying sails “ The Foam ”
Up the tossed flood went straining home ;
The wind blew fair ; she lay that night
At anchor under Kingsport Light.

And late that night, in gladness deep
Sank father, mother, child, to sleep, —
Where no storm breaks, nor terror stirs
The peace of God in Whitewaters.

The Forèst Fire

The night was grim and still with dread ;
No star shone down from heaven's dome ;
The ancient forest closed around
The settler's lonely home.

There came a glare that lit the north ;
There came a wind that roused the night ;
But child and father slumbered on,
Nor felt the growing light.

The Forest Fire

There came a noise of flying feet,
With many a strange and dreadful cry ;
And sharp flames crept and leapt along
The red verge of the sky.

There came a deep and gathering roar.
The father raised his anxious head ;
He saw the light, like a dawn of blood,
That streamed across his bed.

It lit the old clock on the wall,
It lit the room with splendor wild,
It lit the fair and tumbled hair
Of the still sleeping child ;

The Book of the Native

And zigzag fence, and rude log barn,
And chip-strewn yard, and cabin gray,
Glowed crimson in the shuddering glare
Of that untimely day.

The boy was hurried from his sleep ;
The horse was hurried from his stall ;
Up from the pasture clearing came
The cattle's frightened call.

The boy was snatched to the saddle-bow.
Wildly, wildly, the father rode.
Behind them swooped the hordes of flame
And harried their abode.

The Forest Fire

The scorching heat was at their heels ;
The huge roar hounded them in their flight ;
Red smoke and many a flying brand
Flew o'er them through the night.

And past them fled the wildwood forms —
Far-striding moose, and leaping deer,
And bounding panther, and coursing wolf,
Terrible-eyed with fear.

And closer drew the fiery death ;
Madly, madly, the father rode ;
The horse began to heave and fail
Beneath the double load.

The Book of the Native

The father's mouth was white and stern,
But his eyes grew tender with long farewell.
He said: "Hold fast to your seat, Sweetheart,
And ride Old Jerry well!

"I must go back. Ride on to the river.
Over the ford and the long marsh ride,
Straight on to the town. And I'll meet you,
Sweetheart,
Somewhere on the other side."

He slipped from the saddle. The boy rode on.
His hand clung fast in the horse's mane;
His hair blew over the horse's neck;
His small throat sobbed with pain.

The Forest Fire

"Father! Father!" he cried aloud.

The howl of the fire-wind answered him
With the hiss of soaring flames, and crash
Of shattering limb on limb.

But still the good horse galloped on,
With sinew braced and strength renewed.
The boy came safe to the river ford,
And out of the deadly wood.

* * * * *

And now with his kinsfolk, fenced from fear,
At play in the heart of the city's hum,
He stops in his play to wonder why
His father does not come!

The Vengeance of Gluskâp

A Micmac Legend

Gluskâp, the friend and father of his race,
With help in need went journeying three days' space.

His village slept, and took no thought of harm,
Secure beneath the shadow of his arm.

But wandering wizards watched his outward path,
And marked his fenceless dwelling for their wrath.

They came upon the tempest's midnight wings,
With shock of thunder and the lightning's slings,
And flame, and hail, and all disastrous things.

The Vengeance of Gluskâp

When home at length the hero turned again,
His huts were ashes and his servants slain ;
And o'er the ruin wept a slow, great rain.

He wept not ; but he cried a mighty word
Across the wandering sea, and the sea heard.

Then came great whales, obedient to his hand,
And bare him to the demon-haunted land,

Where, in malign morass and ghostly wood
And grim cliff-cavern, lurked the evil brood.

And scarce the avenger's foot had touched their coast
Ere horror seized on all the wizard host,
And in their hiding-places hushed the boast.

The Book of the Native

He grew and gloomed before them like a cloud,
And his eye drew them till they cried aloud,

And withering like spent flame before his frown
They ran forth in a madness and fell down.

Rank upon rank they lay without a moan,—
His finger touched them, and their hearts grew stone.

All round the coasts he heaped their stiffened clay;
And the seamews wail o'er them to this day.

The Muse and the Wheel

The poet took his wheel one day
A-wandering to go,
But soon fell out beside the way,
The leaves allured him so.

He leaned his wheel against a tree
And in the shade lay down ;
And more to him were bloom and bee
Than all the busy town.

The Book of the Native

He listened to the Phœbe-bird
And learned a thing worth knowing.
He lay so still he almost heard
The merry grasses growing.

He lay so still he dropped asleep ;
And then the Muse came by.
The stars were in her garment's sweep,
But laughter in her eye.

"Poor boy !" she said, "how tired he seems !
His vagrant feet must follow
So many loves, so many dreams, —
(To find them mostly hollow !)

The Muse and the Wheel

"No marvel if he does not feel
My old familiar nearness!"
And then her gaze fell on his wheel
And wondered at its queerness.

"Can you be Pegasus," she mused,
"To modern mood translated,
But poorly housed, and meanly used,
And grown attenuated?"

"Ah, no, you're quite another breed
From him who once would follow
Across the clear Olympian mead
The calling of Apollo!"

The Book of the Native

"No Hippocrene would leap to light
If you should stamp your hoof.
You never knew the pastures bright
Wherein we lie aloof.

"You never drank of Helicon,
Or strayed in Tempe's vale.
You never soared against the sun
Till earth grew faint and pale.

"You bear my poor deluded boy
Each latest love to see!
But Pegasus would mount with joy
And bring him straight to me!"

The Muse and the Wheel

He woke. The olden spell was strong
Within his eager bosom ;
And so he wrote a mystic song
Upon the nearest blossom.

He wrote, until a sudden whim
Set all his bosom trembling ;
Then sped to woo a maiden slim
His latest love resembling.

The "Laughing Sally"

A wind blew up from Pernambuco.

(Yeo heave ho! the "Laughing Sally"!

Hi yeo, heave away!)

A wind blew out of the east-sou'-east

And boomed at the break of day.

The "Laughing Sally" sped for her life,

And a speedy craft was she.

The black flag flew at her top to tell

How she took toll of the sea.

The "Laughing Sally"

The wind blew up from Pernambuco ;
And in the breast of the blast
Came the King's black ship, like a hound let slip
On the trail of the "Sally" at last.

For a day and a night, a night and a day ;
Over the blue, blue round,
Went on the chase of the pirate quarry,
The hunt of the tireless hound.

"Land on the port bow !" came the cry ;
And the "Sally" raced for shore,
Till she reached the bar at the river-mouth
Where the shallow breakers roar.

The Book of the Native

She passed the bar by a secret channel
With clear tide under her keel,—
For he knew the shoals like an open book,
The captain at the wheel.

She passed the bar, she sped like a ghost,
Till her sails were hid from view
By the tall, liana'd, unsunned boughs
O'erbrooding the dark bayou.

At moonrise up to the river-mouth
Came the King's black ship of war.
The red cross flapped in wrath at her peak,
But she could not cross the bar.

The "Laughing Sally"

And while she lay in the run of the seas,
By the grimmest whim of chance
Out of a bay to the north came forth
Two battle-ships of France.

On the English ship the twain bore down
Like wolves that range by night;
And the breaker's roar was heard no more
In the thunder of the fight.

The crash of the broadsides rolled and stormed
To the "Sally," hid from view
Under the tall, liana'd boughs
Of the moonless, dark bayou.

The Book of the Native

A boat ran out for news of the fight,
And this was the word she brought —
“The King’s ship fights the ships of France
As the King’s ships all have fought !”

Then muttered the mate, “I’m a man of Devon !”
And the captain thundered then —
“There’s English rope that bides for our necks,
But we all be English men !”

The “Sally” glided out of the gloom
And down the moon-white river.
She stole like a gray shark over the bar
Where the long surf seethes forever.

The "Laughing Sally"

She hove to under a high French hull,
And the red cross rose to her peak.
The French were looking for fight that night,
And they hadn't far to seek.

Blood and fire on the streaming decks,
And fire and blood below ;
The heat of hell, and the reek of hell,
And the dead men laid a-row !

And when the stars paled out of heaven
And the red dawn-rays uprushed,
The oaths of battle, the crash of timbers,
The roar of the guns were hushed.

The Book of the Native

With one foe beaten under his bow,
The other afar in flight,
The English captain turned to look
For his fellow in the fight.

The English captain turned, and stared ;—
For where the "Sally" had been
Was a single spar upthrust from the sea
With the red-cross flag serene !

* * * * *

A wind blew up from Pernambuco, —
(Yeo heave ho ! the "Laughing Sally" !
Hi yeo, heave away !)
And boomed for the doom of the "Laughing
Sally,"
Gone down at the break of day.

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